

In Memoriam

Boris E. Ricks

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of Dr. Boris E. Ricks, an esteemed scholar, mentor, and advocate, who departed this life on September 5, 2024. Dr. Ricks was a dedicated professor of political science, renowned for his impactful teaching, research, and unwavering commitment to student success.

Dr. Ricks began his academic journey at Southwest Community College, and from there he attended Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU), where he excelled both academically and athletically. A member of the All-Southwestern Athletic Conference Academic Team, he exemplified the balance of academic rigor and athletic excellence. During his time at MVSU, he played alongside NFL legend Jerry Rice, contributing to one of the most celebrated teams in the program's history. His achievements as a student-athlete reflected his dedication, discipline, and ability to excel in diverse fields.

After earning his undergraduate degree, Dr. Ricks pursued advanced studies at the University of Mississippi and the University of California, where he honed his expertise in political science, public policy, and governance. His academic career was marked by a commitment to experiential learning, with a focus on innovative teaching methods that bridged theory and practice. Dr. Ricks firmly believed in the transformative power of education and centered his teaching on engaging students in real-world applications of political science.

Dr. Ricks' distinguished teaching career spanned several institutions. From 2006 to 2008, he served as an assistant professor in the department of political science at the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC). In 2008, he joined California State University, Northridge (CSUN) as an associate professor of political science, where he continued to inspire and educate students until his passing. While at Northridge, he also taught as an adjunct professor at Santa Monica Community College. His dedication to teaching and learning enriched the academic experiences of countless students, equipping them with critical thinking skills and practical knowledge necessary to excel in their fields. He also served on the faculty senate.

As a professional political scientist, Dr. Ricks was a brilliant scholar of racial and ethnic politics, Black politics, and urban politics. His published research and writings included numerous articles, book chapters, and book reviews featured in *National Political Science Review*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *American Review of Politics*, and other academic outlets. Dr. Ricks was a leader and longstanding member of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), where he served as co-chair of local arrangements for the 55th Annual

Conference in Los Angeles in March 2024. His commitment to service and scholarship was recognized in 2019 when he received the prestigious Fannie Lou Hamer Outstanding Community Service Award, conferred by NCOBPS in honor of his nationally recognized efforts to uplift Black communities.

Western Political Science Association President Dr. Lorrie Frasure, professor of political science and African American studies and Director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center at UCLA, met Dr. Ricks at NCOBPS nearly 20 years ago as a graduate student. Reflecting on Dr. Ricks, she noted that he was a thoughtful, caring, and deeply engaged scholar, who loved Los Angeles. "He was a fierce advocate for voting rights and good governance fighting to uplift Black and other marginalized groups in Los Angeles and nationally. He was our big brother and supportive colleague, with a leadership and collaborative style that was warm and humble, yet confident and determined to make meaningful change."

Dr. Ricks' contributions extended far beyond academia. In his own community, he was a passionate advocate for change in Los Angeles and the greater LA region. A regular commentator for local television, radio, print, and social media news outlets, Dr. Ricks was widely respected for his insights on political and social issues. Most recently, he helped lead the LA Governance Reform Project, proposing significant reforms to the Los Angeles City Council aimed at increasing transparency and accountability within municipal government. His work reflected his deep belief in the power of informed and ethical governance to effect meaningful change.

Reflecting on their 40-year friendship, Dr. Byron D'Andra Orey shared, "Boris and I first met 40 years ago on the football field at Mississippi Valley State University. Our paths intertwined throughout our lives—we attended graduate school together, collaborated on publications, and I had the honor of being the best man at his wedding. Most importantly, Boris taught me the value of prioritizing family. He once told me, 'If you're going to burn out, let it be for your family, not your job.' That wisdom profoundly shaped how I approach my career and personal life."

The legacy of Dr. Boris E. Ricks continues through his beloved family—wife Gina, daughters Brooklyn, Jazmyn, and Tatyanna, grandsons Dallas and Zkaden—and through the countless lives he transformed. As an educator, mentor, and champion for justice, he inspired generations of students with his wisdom and passion. Those who knew him, from family to colleagues to the many students he guided, carry forward his vision of a more equitable and informed society.

He will be deeply missed but forever remembered. Rest in power, Dr. Ricks. ■

—D'Andra Orey, Jackson State University

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